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# A Report On the Status of the Transit Preferential Streets Program · as of July 1, 1977

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by the Department of City Planning for the Transportation Policy Group

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# A REPORT
# ON THE STATUS OF THE
# TRANSIT PREFERENTIAL STREETS PROGRAM
# as of July 1, 1977

TRANSPORTATION POLICY GROUP

Department of Public Works
Public Utilities Commission
Department of City Planning
Parking Authority (as of July 1977)

# INTRODUCTION

The Transit Preferential Streets Program is the program under which San Francisco implements its Transit First Policy. This report summarizes what has happened to the Transit Preferential Streets Program in San Francisco over the past five years, since it was proposed in 1972 as part of the Transportation element of the Master Plan.

Included in the report are: a background discussion, accomplishments during the past fiscal year 1976-77, plans for fiscal year 1977-78, evaluations of the various street treatments, and a final discussion of major problems facing the Transit Preferential Streets Program.

## Background

After the publication of background issue papers and reports, and after extensive public hearings and discussion, the Transportation element of the Comprehensive Plan for the City and County of San Francisco was adopted by Resolution 6834 of the San Francisco City Planning Commission, on April 27, 1972. That plan, under Objective 1, Policy 2 of the General Objectives and Policies, called for the city to "Give priority to public transit as the means of meeting San Francisco's transportation needs, particularly those of commuters."

More specifically, Objective 1, Policy 1, of the Mass Transit Plan calls for the City to "Improve speed of transit travel and service by giving priority to transit vehicles where conflicts with auto traffic occur, and by establishing a transit preferential streets system." The Transit Preferential Streets Plan in the Master Plan outlined extensive mileage within San Francisco which deserved transit preferential treatment.

Subsequently, the San Francisco Planning and Urban Renewal Association published a report on the San Francisco Municipal Railway which, among other things, also called for giving top priority to transit vehicles. With these two documents as an impetus, and again after public hearings and debate, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors adopted resolution 189-73, on March 19, 1973, "Declaring that Municipal Railway and Other Transit Vehicles be Given Priority over Other Vehicles on San Francisco Streets" and directing the Departments of City Planning and Public Works and the Public Utilities Commission to develop a transit preferential street system within six months.

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An initial Transit Preferential Streets Program, intended to be a first phase in the development of a transit streets system, was jointly proposed by the three departments; the report outlined possible treatment on eight major San Francisco streets. The intention was to design short-range, low-cost street alternatives which could be easily implemented to begin to improve transit service through efficiencies using the existing street system and without awaiting major capital investments. The report was accepted by the City Planning Commission with Resolution 7093, dated October 25, 1973, and transmitted to the Board of Supervisors for action. Again after public debate, four of the recommended street treatments were approved by the Board for implementation in Resolution 140-72, on February 25, 1974.

Implementation

The four streets proposed for treatment at that time were:

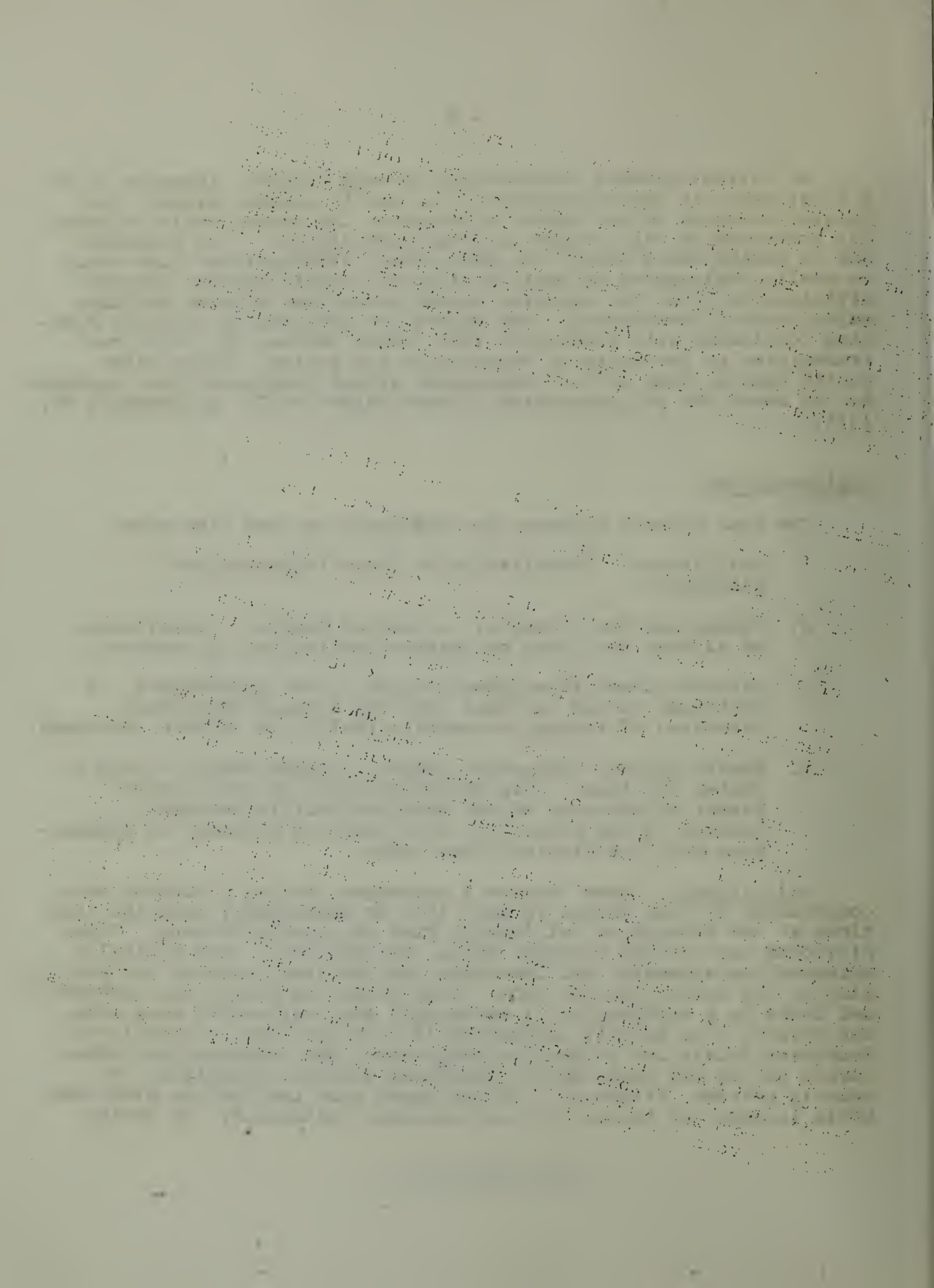
1. Polk Street. Installation of three temporary bus platforms.

2. Sutter and Post Streets, a one-way couple. Installation of all-day bus lanes on certain portions of the streets.

3. Mission Street, from Duboce Street to The Embarcadero. A westbound center bus lane with bus islands; eastbound, diversion of through automobile traffic at certain locations.

4. Fourth Street. Passenger loading islands combined with a center bus lane. This treatment would be from Mission Street to the area of the Southern Pacific Terminal. Because of its proximity, this work was proposed in combination with the Mission Street work.

Polk Street. Three temporary passenger loading platforms were constructed on Polk Street in May, 1974 at southbound, nearside locations at the corners of California, Pine and Sutter Streets. These platforms were poured concrete slabs, 40 feet long, that basically extended the sidewalk, and therefore the bus stop, through the parking lane to the moving traffic lane. Polk Street is narrow and congested, and there is a combination of commercial and residential uses along the street. The heavily patronized 19-Polk bus line frequently encountered delays due to traffic congestion, and vehicles were often parked in the bus zone, making passenger loading, especially for elderly patrons, difficult. It was hoped that the loading platforms would improve bus travel time and schedule reliability by saving



the time expended having to pull into and away from bus stops in congested traffic, and that passenger boarding would be improved by eliminating illegal commercial and automobile parking in the bus zones.

These test platforms were constructed for a 90-day trial, but were used for two and one-half years before permanent platforms were installed.

Sutter and Post Streets. Exclusive transit lanes were installed on Sutter Street between Gough and Stockton Streets, a distance of 1.02 miles, and on Post Street between Gough and Taylor Streets, a distance of .74 miles. They were installed on those portions of the one-way streets that were about 45 feet in width, leaving the narrower and more congested portions of Sutter and Post, between Market Street and Stockton/Taylor, with only peak-hour curb bus lanes.

The lanes are 17 to 18 feet in width, depending on the total street width for that block, and include space for the bus lane as well as curb parking. Auto and truck parking is allowed at off-peak times; the moving lane is for busses and right-turning vehicles (within one block of their turn) only; when peak-hour towaway regulations are in effect, the entire lane is for transit vehicles and right turns only.

These streets carry a very heavy transit load, over 1000 trips daily on the 1-California, 2-Clement, 3-Jackson and 45-Greenwich bus and electric trolley lines. Previously the peak-hour curb lanes for transit vehicles were frequently blocked, and did little for heavy midday patronage. The transit lanes were designed to improve transit travel time and schedule reliability, by providing a semi-exclusive bus lane from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. on these two streets.

The lanes were striped with chevrons along with "Bus Only" messages, and were augmented with the diamond symbol for bus lanes when they were repainted in 1976. The lanes were originally installed January 19, 1975, and are still in use in their original form.

Mission Street. Mission is the second most heavily used transit street in the City, with the 9-Richland, 11-Hoffman, 12-Mission-Ocean, 14-Mission plus 14 Limited and Express busses, and the 26-Valencia. There are close to 1500 transit vehicle trips a day, and headways of about 40 seconds at peak time. Mission Street in this area also has congested auto and commercial traffic, and a narrow, 52-foot roadway width for the majority of the blocks involved.

Because of the importance of Mission Street to the Municipal Railway system and to the many Muni patrons who utilize this stretch of Mission Street daily, a transit preferential street treatment was

devised. The narrowness of the street combined with the two-way traffic generated a proposal for a single westbound curb traffic lane (retaining parking) and a single westbound exclusive transit lane, in the center lane. Passenger loading islands would be installed in the street, so that weaving movements back-and-forth to westbound curb bus stops would be eliminated. Eastbound traffic would be reduced to a single lane. To give preference to transit movement, through auto traffic was to be diverted, at 4th and 11th Streets, to Folsom Street.

In the Spring of 1976, after two years to obtain funds and do engineering, partial implementation of the Mission Street treatment was begun. As part of repaving work on Mission between 6th and 11th Streets, the single eastbound lane was striped on the pavement, and a sign indicating traffic diversion at 11th Street was installed. Neither the enforcing concrete traffic diverters nor the positive transit lane and island improvements were installed., as it was intended to do these at a later date.

Immediate public protest from concerned merchants on Mission Street, especially those with automobile-oriented businesses, resulted in unfavorable newspaper articles and editorials and finally led to the passage of Resolution 396-75 by the Board of Supervisors on June 7, 1976, urging suspension of work on the Mission Street transit preferential street treatment until additional public hearings were held.

Fourth Street. Because of the suspension of work on Mission Street, the work on Fourth Street, which was to have been part of the Mission Street contract, was never implemented.

## Fiscal Year 1976-77

An interdepartmental staff Transit Preferential Streets Committee worked on developing the initial transit preferential streets program in 1973 and 1974, but was disbanded when implementation was due to begin. However, the slow progress and the frustrating delays led to the resumption of the committee, in an effort to speed implementation of the program.

The past fiscal year has seen an increased pace of work on previously approved street treatments, as well as planning for new projects, and improvements to projects now in place.

Polk Street. Permanent, attractive bus platforms have been installed at five locations on Polk Street, including the three stops previously tested. One of these three, Pine Street, was moved to farside, and the additional two platforms were located mid-block between Sacramento and Clay Streets, and between Washington and Jackson Streets.

All five platforms were designed to blend with the present sidewalk, and include new Muni bus stop information signs as well as attractive litter receptacles. Three of the five platforms also have wooden benches, which are attractive and sturdy. The five permanent platforms were installed in early 1977, at a cost of $40,000.

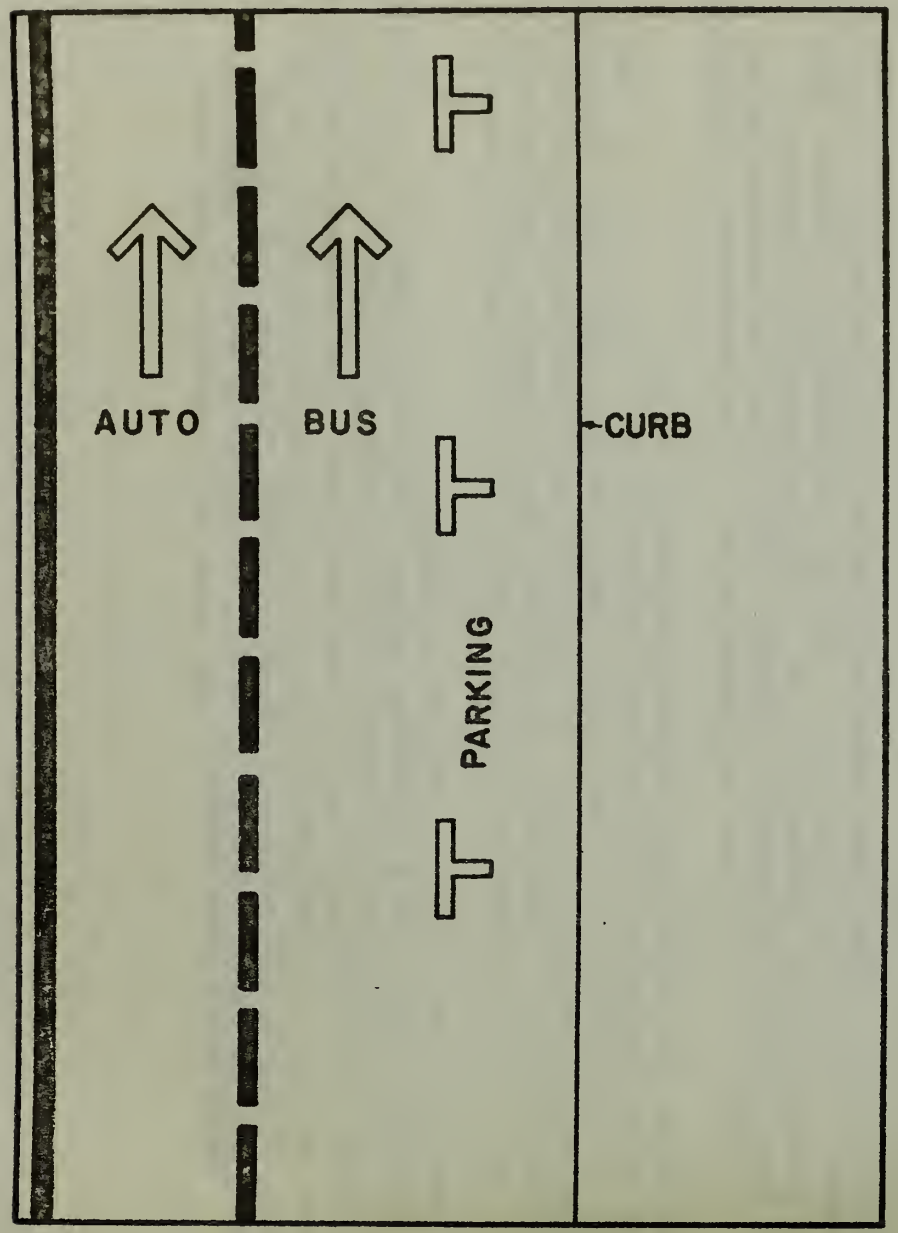
Mission Street. As a result of Mission Street merchant objections to the original transit preferential plan, extended meetings were held between lawyers representing the merchants and staff from the Department of City Planning and the Municipal Railway.

A new, compromise plan was developed and presented at a joint public meeting of the Public Utilities Commission and the City Planning Commission on July 15, 1976. That plan removed the automobile diversions and reinstated two lanes of traffic in each direction, instituted all-day transit lanes from Beale Street to Fourth Street, and instituted peak-hour bus lanes from Fourth Street to Eleventh Street. The plan was accepted by both the merchants and the Muni, and after additional public comment, the City Planning Commission adopted Resolution 7538 on August 5, 1976. The Board of Supervisors subsequently approved the compromise transit preferential treatment on September 27, 1976, by Resolution 780-76.

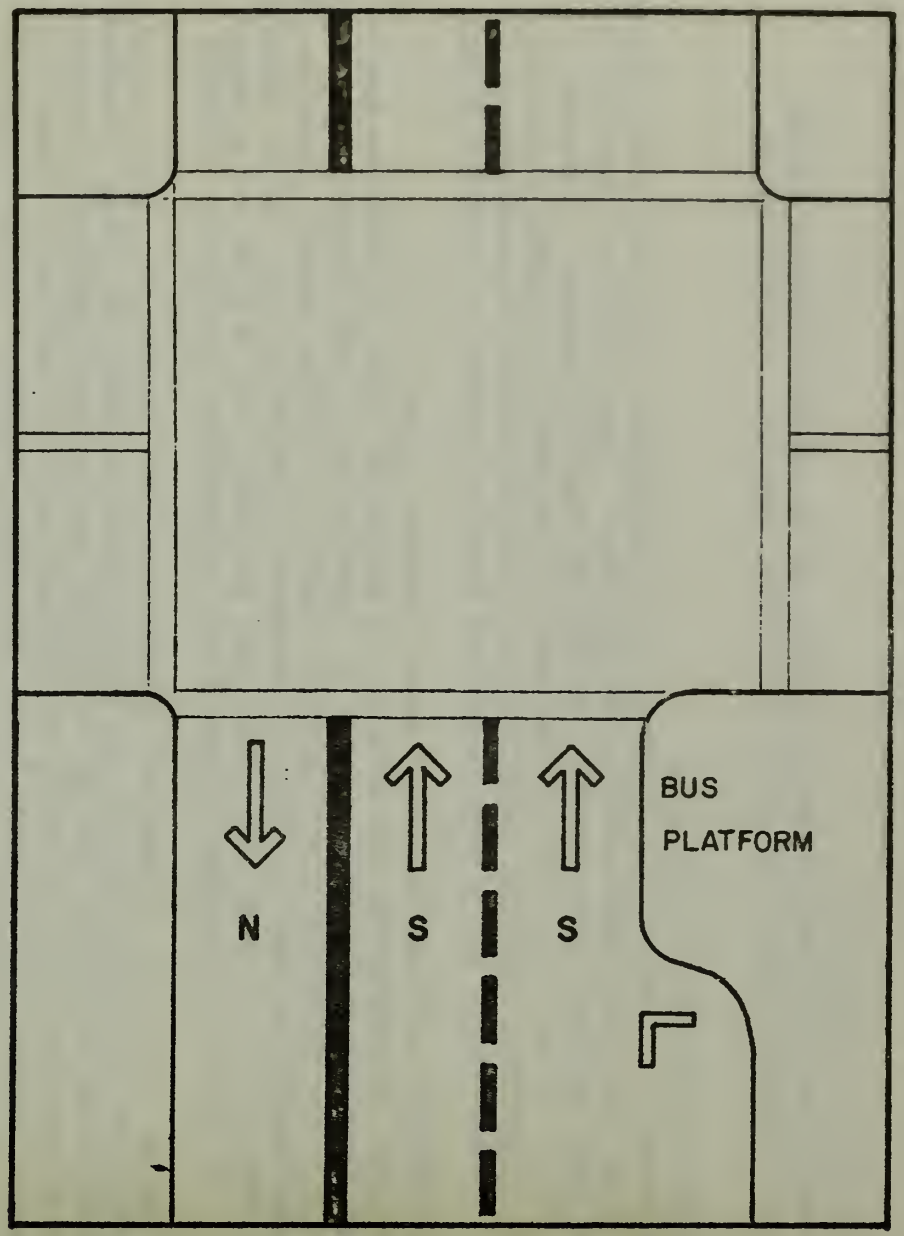
The restriping was accomplished in January 1977, and the lanes commenced operation shortly thereafter. The diamond symbol and "Bus Only" messages were used. Initial enforcement problems caused a set of improvements to be made in May and June 1977, including better delineation of the lane by solid rather than dashed lines and additional diamonds. The original installation cost $24,500.

Sutter and Post Streets. Permanent thermoplastic application of the transit lanes on these streets was recommended by the Transit Preferential Streets Committee, and is due to be accomplished in late 1977. The work would involve sandblasting any of the former, painted over street markings as well as going over the lane markings and transit preferential messages with the plastic. This type of permanent marking has high initial installation cost, but very low maintenance over its five-year life. Painting usually has to be renewed every six months to a year. The original installation cost $21,500.

Geary and O'Farrell Streets. The Transit Preferential Streets Committee recommended treatment on the 45-foot-wide downtown segments of these streets similar to that on Sutter/Post. These transit lanes would be all-day, 18-foot lanes and are also due for installation before the end of 1977. The Board of Supervisors approved their design in June 1977.




BUS LANE




BUS PLATFORM

Restriping Peak Lanes. Rush-hour curb transit lanes were installed in past years on a number of downtown street segments. Those on lower Sutter/Post/Geary/O'Farrell Streets, as well as those on Clay and Sacramento Streets, have been scheduled for restriping and improvements by the Committee. The segments on Sutter, Post, Clay, Geary and O'Farrell are all approximately a half-mile in length, while the Sacramento Street peak-hour lane is 1.28 miles in length (from Drumm to Larkin Streets).

All of the peak-hour transit lanes will be standardized with diamond symbols, "Bus Only" messages, lane markings, and transit preferential street signs. It is hoped this standardization will help to familiarize drivers with the lanes and their use, and improve self-enforcement of the bus-only regulations. This work is also scheduled for completion before the end of 1977.

Phase II. With the implementation of the permanent treatments for Polk Street and Mission Street, along with the suspension of the Fourth Street project*, Phase I of the transit preferential streets program was completed. All of the approved streets from the original 1973 report had been dealt with. At this point, a Phase II program was developed.

Possible streets for Phase II were limited to those which had been a recognized problem since the 1973 report. It was felt by the committee that it would be appropriate to deal with these streets first, then consider the 25 miles of recommended street treatment developed by Wilbur Smith and Associates as part of their recommendations to the Muni Planning, Operations and Marketing (POM) study.

A list of possible streets was developed, primarily through recommendations from the Municipal Railway, and a list of transit preferential street criteria developed jointly by the three departments. By applying the criteria (which included travel time savings, safety considerations, volume of transit use, improvement of passenge comfort, enforcement and costs), a priority list of streets was developed, and some streets were dropped from the list.

Streets to be investigated as part of Phase II include Geary and O'Farrell Streets (which have already been recommended for transit lanes), the lower portions of Sutter/Post/Geary/O'Farrell, Van Ness Avenue from Market Street to Lombard Street, Stockton Street, and Jefferson and Beach Streets. Each will be focused on separately, thoroughly studied and a treatment decision made before going on to another street.

* The Fourth Street project by itself was not considered of sufficiently high priority relative to other streets which might be improved.

# TRANSIT PREFERENTIAL STREET PROGRAM

## CURRENT TRANSIT PRIORITY INSTALLATIONS

——— Exclusive Transit Lanes

..... Peak Hour Transit Lanes

- - - - - Exclusive Rights of Way

-•-•-•- Bus Platforms

# Transit Preferential Street Program

## Current Transit Priority Installations

### Exclusive Transit Lanes

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Sutter Street, Stockton to Gough | curb lane | 1.02 miles |
| Post Street, Gough to Taylor | curb lane | .74 miles |
| Mission Street, Beale to 4th | curb lane | .65 miles |
| 4th Street, Berry to King | contraflow lane | .08 miles |
| *Geary Street, Mason to Gough | curb lane | .68 miles |
| *O'Farrell Street, Gough to Hyde | curb lane | .41 miles |

*to be installed 1977

### Exclusive Rights of Way

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Market Street, Fremont to Duboce | streetcar lane, other treatments | 2.2 miles |
| Judah Street, 9th to 19th Avenues | raised streetcar right-of-way | .62 miles |
| Powell Street, Sutter to California | cablecar right-of-way | .39 miles |
| Powell Street, California to Washington | special treatment | .18 miles |
| Powell Street Mall, Market to Ellis | transit mall | 275 feet |

### Peak Hour Transit Lanes

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Sutter Street, Stockton to Market | PM curb lane | .36 miles |
| Post Street, Market to Taylor | AM curb lane | .57 miles |
| Geary Street, Market to Mason | PM curb lane | .30 miles |
| O'Farrell Street, Hyde to Powell | AM curb lane | .53 miles |
| Mission Street, 4th to 11th | AM & PM curb lanes | 1.03 miles |
| Sacramento Street, Drumm to Larkin | PM curb lane | 1.28 miles |
| Clay Street, Sansome to Powell | AM curb lane | .45 miles |
| First Street, Market to Transbay Terminal | PM center lane | .14 miles |

### Bus Platforms

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Polk Street, Jackson to Sutter | 5 bus platforms | .45 miles |

Other Transit Priority Treatments. In addition to the various lengths of transit preferential streets listed on the accompanying chart, specific locations and problems are dealt with through the program. As part of improvements on the Mission Street treatment, parking regulations between Third and Fourth Streets are being changed to accommodate a longer westbound left-turn haven, for turning from Mission Street onto Fourth Street, in order to lessen congestion at that location. Similarly, parking regulations on O'Farrell Street are being changed to move a single block of towaway from the north side to the south side of the street in order to fully clear the transit lane during rush hour. Signal timing was adjusted on Post Street at Gough and Franklin Streets in order to allow adequate time for transit vehicles to clear the latter intersection. A bus stop is being proposed for movement from farside O'Farrell Street, at Van Ness Avenue, to nearside O'Farrell, with a bus platform installed as well.

Some transit priority techniques may have application at location throughout San Francisco. The present 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. all-day transit lane enforcement is gradually being changed to 24-hour exclusive lanes, to simplify enforcement. Traffic signal preemption for transit, already used on the cable car lines and at key locations on streetcar lines, may also have application on other streets.

Many items are being investigated which may not lead to action. For example, using buttons as lane markers has been discussed but not implemented at this time, due to installation and maintenance costs; their use as a self-enforcement device may be discussed again at a future date.

Fiscal Year 1977-1978

Implementation for FY1977-78 includes the aforementioned transit lanes on the wider portions of Geary and O'Farrell Streets, thermoplastic striping on Sutter and Post Streets, and the standardization of the peak-hour lanes on Sutter, Post, Geary, O'Farrell (on the narrower portions), Clay and Sacramento Streets. Implementation of further improvements or projects depends on the planning effort developed within the Transit Preferential Streets Committee and the Transportation Policy Group, and the appropriate approvals necessary within City government.

Planning for FY1977-78 encompasses several major areas: 1) the design and implementation of transit preferential treatments for a set of streets presently being studied as Phase II of the TPS Program, and 2) the development of a coherent, long-range transit preferential street program budget, including both annual maintenance of the present street treatments and additional, phased preferential street treatments.

Treatment for the narrower segments of lower Sutter/Post/Geary/ O'Farrell to Market Street is presently being examined. This is the most congested portion of these streets, the part of the routes wherein current service suffers the most delay. Possible treatments include maintaining the present peak-hour lanes, developing all-day bus lanes (probably by removing one lane of parking), or developing certain streets as transit-commercial streets, in conjunction with contraflow bus lanes. Peak hour bus lanes will be examined for Van Ness Avenue, and the Stockton Street study will include bus platforms, a possible bus lane, and changes in the parking regulations.

The second part of the planning effort is to pull together the various transit preferential street treatments that have been developed over time, standardize their appearance so that motorists will become more familiar with them, and develop an accurate long-range budget for the program.

The long-range program budget being developed at this time will include, but not be limited to:

1. Development of annual maintenance budget, including;

    a. restriping all lanes annually;

    b. thermoplastic treatment of one major transit lane (or one-way couple) annually;

    c. development of standardized pavement markings and identifying signs.

2. Installation of additional transit preferential treatments;

    a. study and recommendations for all Phase II streets;

    b. study of possible improvements to streets already implemented;

    c. study and recommendation on spot problems and possible treatments, as they arise;

    d. development of annual budget projections for additions to transit street system;

    e. development of a Phase III program for investigation.

Financing for the transit preferential streets program will most likely continue to be a combination of City funds and gas tax and federal urban systems (FAU) funding for significant projects. Other avenues of non-ad valorum funding, particularly through the UMTA and FHWA programs, will be investigated.

Coordination of Transit Preferential Street Committee with the POM study and the development of the Municipal Railway Five Year Plan will continue. The Committee evaluated the recommendations for 25 miles of additional transit street treatment, and once Phase II is completed will address the POM recommendations as part of Phase III.

Status of Transit Priority on Major Corridor Routes

The on-board passenger counts performed as part of the POM study helped, along with vehicle transit trip counts, to delineate the most heavily used transit streets. Transit preferential treatment for most of these corridors has been initiated:

1. Most heavily used at this time is Market Street; an exclusive right of way exists for Muni streetcars, plus passenger loading islands, turn prohibitions, and exclusive lane on First Street, phased traffic lights at the intersection of Franklin and Market Streets, and other transit improvements.

2. Mission is the second heaviest transit corridor, with about three times as many through transit passenger trips as auto passenger trips daily. Further improvements to the transit lanes are being studied.

3. The Sutter/Post one-way couple carries over 1000 transit vehicle trips daily. The wider portion of the street has had a transit lane for two and one-half years; the more congested, narrower portions of the streets are presently under investigation for a permanent treatment.

4. The Geary/O'Farrell one way couplet is the fourth most heavily used transit corridor, with all-day transit lanes about to be installed on the wider portions, and the narrower portions under study along with the Sutter/Post narrow portions.

5. The 30-Stockton line has the highest utilization (passengers per trip) of any line in the City; treatment for the congested portions of the route as it passes through Chinatown, long a vexing problem, is presently under study.

6. The 38-Geary line has the highest daily ridership of any transit line in the entire City, 50,000 daily. Transit preferential treatment for outer Geary Street, as opposed to the downtown portions of Geary and O'Farrell, will require extensive study. Past studies have investigated the possibilities of rapid transit for this corridor (it was formerly a streetcar line), so future studies will result in a full range of alternatives.

Evaluation of Program

There are a number of objectives for transit preferential street treatment:

1. reduce travel time;

2. improve schedule reliability;

3. improve safety;

4. improve passenger comfort;

5. improve transit operator conditions;

6. increase the visibility of transit to public;

7. demonstrate City is indeed serious about "Transit First".

Evaluations have been performed by both the Department of Public Works (DPW) and the Municipal Railway on a number of the transit preferential street treatments.

Sutter/Post Streets. A Municipal Railway evaluation of these transit lanes was conducted in 1975. An increase of 31 percent in patronage on one line was reported, but these are very limited data. A 26 percent reduction in late coaches was reported for all lines, comparing the first two weeks of December, 1974 (before the lanes were installed) with the first two weeks of February, 1975 (after installation). Christmas traffic may have accounted for this difference.

Of more interest is detailed interviews with 15 operators who drive the streets. It was a unanimous reaction that the lane did improve operations, but the improvement was a limited one. About one-half of the drivers felt that their schedule reliability had been improved, while the great majority thought better enforcement of the bus lane and of double-parking regulations would greatly improve the operation of the lane. The main conclusion of the Muni report was that better police enforcement was needed.

The Department of Public Works conducted an evaluation of Sutter and Post Streets, as of March 31, 1977. A sample count in November, 1975, indicated about a 3 percent violation rate at off-peak times, 16 violators versus 611 autos in the proper lanes. By way of comparison, a Department of City Planning study in March, 1976, at peak hour on Sutter Street indicated about a 12 percent violation rate. DPW also conducted speed and delay studies, which indicated no change in either of these factors, and an accident review over several years which indicated no real change in accident statistics. In sum, the DPW report found no real changes in any of the measures it investigated.

Polk Street. DPW and Muni also conducted evaluations of the bus platforms on Polk Street. DPW found that the platforms did not reduce passenger loading delays, or increase travel time. Their measures indicated no significant changes.

The Muni study focused on interviews of 16 operators who worked the 19-Polk before and after the installation of the bus platforms. Of the 16 drivers interviewed, 15 supported their installation as a good idea and positive improvement. The drivers appreciated the elimination of maneuvering in and out of the present bus stops, and felt the platforms particularly helped elderly passengers board the bus. Opinions were mixed about improved travel time, but many operators felt an added advantage of the platforms is that it readily identifies passengers waiting for the bus, as opposed to other pedestrians. A complaint (since rectified with the installation of the permanent platforms) voiced by several operators was that lack of signs confused some patrons as to whether the platform was a bus stop or not. (signs have now been installed).

Mission Street. While no formal reports of the Mission Street transit lanes have been made, Muni statistics indicate a reduction in the average number of daily switchbacks*, over 15- day test

* "Switchback" is when a transit vehicle is turned back short of its terminal, to maintain its schedule.

periods, from 22 to 14, a 37 percent decrease. Further, a 6-week comparison showed a switchback reduction from 36 to 17, a 53 percent decrease. Informal operator interviews also indicate a favorable reaction to the lanes.

A review of accident statistics for Muni vehicles for February and March, 1976, versus February and March, 1977, indicate a 50 percent reduction in accidents each month; from 12 to 6 in February, and from 8 to 4 in March. Comparisons for April are not available because of a City strike in April, 1976. May comparisons are not available at this time. While these data are very limited, they do suggest what may be a significant trend.

General Evaluation. The Transit Preferential Streets Program may be said to have achieved moderate short range improvements commensurate with the moderate City commitment to the program and the modest funds expended. The following conclusions evaluate the program in terms of its seven objectives.

The transit lanes do not appear to have had a major effect on travel times per se. It would be unrealistic to expect any significant improvements on short stretches of City streets with lanes that can be easily violated.

Opinion seems more positive on the improvement of schedule adherance and reliability. A reduction in switchbacks indicates definite improvement on Mission Street.

There also seems to be positive operator reaction to various transit preferential treatments, and improved conditions for passengers. The impact on safety or accident reduction is inconclusive at this time.

Whether the transit preferential treatments have increased the visibility of transit to the public cannot yet be determined. The combination of standardized pavement marking and signing on all transit preferential streets, improvements to present transit preferential treatments, and additional transit preferential streets should combine to make the public more aware of the program within the next year or two.

## Problems Facing the Program

There are two significant problems facing the Transit Preferential Streets Program at this time. One very practical one is that

of enforcement. The traffic detail of the Police Department has been significantly reduced, and it is very difficult for that detail to maintain enforcement efforts for the various transit lanes. Since it is relatively easy to violate the lanes, this is a problem. Possible solutions focus on improving the self enforcing nature of the lanes, making their markings more obvious, and investigating possibilities of added police staff to improve enforcement.

A philosophical problem that continues to generate difficulty is the feeling on the part of some individuals that transit preferential treatment is acceptable only when it does not interfere with the free movement of automobile traffic. However,this is contrary to the intent of the Transit First policy which is that transit should receive preference over automobiles when conflicts occur, such as in the lower sections of Sutter/Post/Geary/O'Farrell Streets. This preference is exactly what is specified in both the Master Plan and the Board of Supervisors resolution establishing the City's Transit First policy.

## Conclusion

The various transit preferential treatments do need to demonstrate tangible benefits in exchange for their costs of implementation and reservation of road space for transit vehicles. While full data have not been developed, significant positive comments have been received from transit vehicle operators, and improved service reliability and patron convenience seem to result from several of the treatments. Furthermore, the goal of the Transit First policy to improve transit usage and thus enhance the City remains unchanged; the transit preferential street program is an inherent part of reaching that goal.

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